If it wasn't for Nirvana we'd be a forgotten band

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The Vaselines are considering writing more songs

When The Vaselines split up, singer and guitarist Eugene Kelly thought it was all over for the Glasgow band.

Then one of the most famous groups in music history started playing their music.

Kelly and band-mate Frances McKee were in college when they formed The Vaselines in 1987.

"We lasted two-and-a-half years and released two singles and an album. That was it," says Kelly.

"It was fun. We didn't take it seriously, though we were serious about the song-writing."

He adds: "We knew we didn't have a chance to be a big band.

"No big record labels were interested and we weren't getting into the charts or on Top of the Pops."

The Vaselines will play at this summer's Belladrum music festival

The Vaselines broke up in 1989.

McKee was a primary school teacher for a while and formed bands Painkillers and then Suckle. The latter released an album.

Kelly worked in a bar and formed Captain America, before later changing the name to Eugenius.

The band, which featured members of BMX Bandits and Teenage Fanclub, released two albums and opened European dates for Nirvana.

Kelly and McKee also released solo albums.

But in the early 1990s, millions of music fans became aware of the songs they wrote as The Vaselines.

Nirvana had exploded on to the world music scene.

The US band, whose hits included Smells Like Teen Spirit, would go on to sell more than 75 million records.

Nirvana's frontman Kurt Cobain was a huge Vaselines fan.

Nirvana were one of the biggest bands of the 1990s

Nirvana performed and recorded three Vaselines songs: Molly's Lips, Son of A Gun and Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam - which Cobain also performed live on MTV.

With Cobain's encouragement, The Vaselines reformed briefly for a 1990 Nirvana gig in Edinburgh.

Kelly also sang Molly's Lips with Cobain at 1991's Reading Festival.

Nirvana recorded some of the most memorable songs of the 1990s, including Smells Like Teen Spirit and Lithium.

Cobain took his own life in 1994. The rest of Nirvana would later go on to pursue their own music interests.

Dave Grohl, the band's drummer, is heading for Glasgow's Hampden stadium next week with his band the Foo Fighters.

Kelly, right, sings with Cobain at 1991's Reading Festival

Kelly says he knows mention of Nirvana is likely to come up in interviews at some point, often in a question "sneaked in" at the end.

But he says: "There is no downside to a band like Nirvana recording your songs, and we're happy to talk about it because we are really grateful that it happened.

"I think we would pretty much be a forgotten band.

"Not even a one-hit - a no-hit wonder."

The Vaselines reformed in 2008 and began recording new music.

The connection to Nirvana has helped ensure an audience, but Kelly says huge challenges remain for the band and other musicians trying to make a living in the industry.

"It is tough for bands that are not super famous," he says.

"The music industry doesn't seem to support upcoming, interesting, odd ball kind of music.

"We've always been lo-fi and definitely see ourselves as part-timers and outsiders."

He adds: "Brexit has made it so much more expensive to play somewhere like France, Spain or Germany.

"We can't really afford to go to America, which we love playing, because visa costs are so expensive."

But Kelly goes on: "I love playing the shows, I love playing and singing live.

"It is great to be able to do it."

Frances McKee and Eugene Kelly first formed The Vaselines in the late 1980s

This year The Vaselines are to perform in Dunfermline, Galashiels, Glasgow, Dunbar and next month's Belladrum music festival near Inverness.

The other musicians in the band are Michael McGaughrin on drums, Graeme Smillie in bass and Carla Easton on keyboards.

Kelly says: "We are always interested in playing new places and a festival is great because you play to a bigger crowd and also get the chance to make some new fans."

Looking back to when The Vaselines split, he says: "To be doing it now over 30 years later is just bizarre.

"The shows have started to sell out."

He jokes: "We have been on a slow upward trajectory."

Kelly adds they hope to write some new songs.

"You heard it here first," he says.

"It might or might not work out, but we are definitely thinking about it."

Belladrum Inverness

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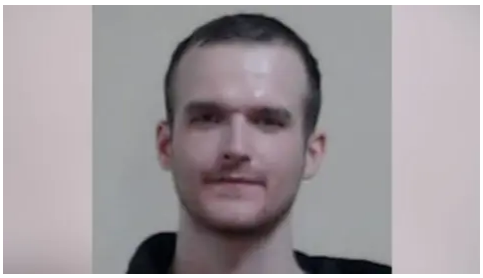

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